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ABSTRACT

This report describes a study about teaching ethics and moral reasoning in the K-12 public schools of Connecticut. Two hundred adults and students were questioned in a random survey representing a cross section of communities in the state. The responses validate Gilligan's levels of moral development that shows different emphases of socialization between males and females. Emphasis for boys is on justice and independence while girls are trained to be nurturing, caring, and to value their connectedness to others. Often a dichotomy exists between purely cognitive moral reasoning and moral behaviors. This issue needs to be addressed through moral education. The table of contents lists the following: (1) "Introduction"; (2) "Rationale"; (3) "Definitions"; (4) "Understanding Developmental Issues as They Relate to Ethics and Moral Reasoning in the Public Schools"; (5) "Developmentally Appropriate Moral Education"; (6) "The Need for Ethics Education"; (7) "Ethics and Moral Reasoning, Goals, and Suggested Activities K-8"; (8) "Ethics and Moral Reasoning, Conceptual Course Outline, 9-12;" (9) "The Role of the Family in Teaching Values"; (10) "Case Study"; (11) "Conclusions and Recommendations"; (12) "Bibliography"; and (13) "About the Authors." As an example of effective strategies for use in a public school district to help resolve differences in values, a case study describing a conflict between proponents and opponents of a particular health curriculum is presented. Contains 81 references. (EH)

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THE TEACHING OF ETHICS AND MORAL REASONING IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

SO 024 655

CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION and CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT an affiliate of ASCD

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CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The Teaching of Ethics and Moral Reasoning

In The

Public Schools

Report of the 1991-1992 Study Committee

Fall 1992

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I. INTRODUCTION

This publication about the teaching of ethics and moral reasoning in the public schools, K-12, includes a statement of purpose, definitions of terms and a discussion of the developmental approach to the teaching of ethics. The words of students and teachers, gathered from surveys, are interspersed throughout.

For elementary teachers, we recommend strategies and activities for teaching about the six (6) major values identified by the philosopher Mortimer Adler (1981). For secondary teachers, we include an outline of a model curriculum. We discuss the role of the family in teaching values because parents and educators are partners in this venture.

As an example of effective strategies for use in a public school district, a case study describing a conflict of values between proponents and opponents of a particular health curriculum is presented. Educators may use these strategies to resolve differences in values. We encourage all school personnel to consider the recommendations which we propose.

II. RATIONALE

Whether choosing sides for a game, finding a solution to a mathematical problem, or grading an essay, human beings continually make judgments and decisions. Too often the ethical origins of what we do are invisible. Humans are, by nature, value-setting beings. The question for American public education is whether we reasonably determine those values or accept them haphazardly.

There are serious problems in American society. These problems are evident at every school level and exist in the extremes of casual cheating to deadly violence in the classroom. There are many reasons put forth as to the causes: the breakup of the family; the media, including television; ineffective schools; the waning authority of the church; relativism in philosophy; political opportunism, and so on.

Too often it is assumed that no ethical guidelines exist in today's society. The idea that there are some universal moral principles, that is, principles which extend to all human beings, and are discernible through reason, has somehow been lost. The void created results in a philosophy which holds that "truth, right or wrong, is whatever I say it is."

If everyone believes that truth is whatever he or she says it is, then there is no truth. If everyone believes that right or wrong is whatever he or she says is right or wrong, then there is no right or wrong. A society devoid of a universal or common body of moral and ethical principles is one in which chaos prevails.

There is historic precedent for teaching ethics in the public schools. The teaching of ethics has its rightful place as the fourth "R" in the purpose of education–reading, writing, arithmetic, and responsibility. The foundation of responsible behavior is ethical thinking. What is right and wrong, what are acceptable standards of conduct, and what attitudes and attributes foster and sustain a society–these are proper principles to be addressed in the public schools.

In the past few decades, the public schools have been hesitant about dealing with ethics and moral reasoning, for fear that the specter of "values clarification" again rears its ugly head. We recognize that ethics and moral reasoning should be dealt with not as an additional program or course in a student's schedule, but within the framework of what is already taught. We offer the following suggestions: that such a program be developmentally appropriate and multicultural in its orientation. Characteristics such as this require continuous practice. Ideally they should be part of a K-12 articulated program built within **all** the courses and disciplines in the school program. Until such an approach can be developed and implemented, a high-school elective model is provided. This is a temporary program and should be offered only until a program can be implemented.

Schools, in partnership with the family, develop, foster, and sustain the attitudes and attributes which are an integral part of our existence. We live in a culture that is becoming increasingly pluralistic. Schools cannot use this pluralism as an excuse to avoid directly addressing those universal standards which apply to all human beings.

Given the various influences that have shaped the American experience and mode of thought, such programs must reflect the extensive variety of philosophical bases (such as seen in the Western tradition) and social traditions (such as seen in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia). Over the centuries, the moral and ethical training of new generations has been carried on through these and other traditions. Today, reality dictates that the schools teach moral and ethical reasoning.

We must begin to teach young people how to think about moral questions. We must help students to develop a process of reasoning and decision-making to ensure the quality of their deliberations about moral questions. Young people need to know that there are universal truths which exist despite their personal impulses and desires at a given moment. They need to understand the importance of acting upon those principles which are necessary to the well-being of the society and themselves. We must teach them to recognize that which is desirable and that which is necessary are often not the same.

Plato believed that all men could learn ethical conduct. The logical extension of this premise is that if something can be learned, then it can be taught. Our role as educators should be to show how universal values are important, and that they apply to all.

In response to our survey question about moral dilemmas, a student responded that a critical issue is: "Honesty, overcoming the ease of lying and cheating. This is a problem because there are so many complicated issues. We are brought up with different views. Teachers and parents all expect different things." A teacher wrote: "What are we actually 100% responsible for? To what extent must we be honest with ourselves and with others? We should teach young people, when they are young, to love and respect themselves instead of punishing them and causing inferiority complexes. We should be more corrective and understanding. All young people should be listened to so they can develop their morals soon enough before they make mistakes."

It is the responsibility of present day public educators to prepare youth for their role as responsible members of society by integrating developmentally appropriate moral and ethical teaching and learning into all aspects of the curriculum.

III. DEFINITIONS

Readers of this position paper on the teaching of values and moral reasoning in the public schools might be interested in what, specifically, we consider to be "right" and "wrong." Some might believe the inclusion of a list of values would be helpful. We have carefully decided not to include one. The rationale for that decision is based, in large measure, on the problems that attended the publication of the book, **Cultural Literacy** (Hirsch, 1987).

Hirsch advances one thesis (among others) that most would agree is valid: in order to communicate clearly with one another, we must have a similar understanding of the language. There are subtleties of meaning that we glean from the culture. We are culturally immersed in colloquialisms, slang, and idioms that allow us to understand perfectly when a person similarly situated speaks to us. Conversely, we are easily confused, or worse, we think we understand when a person from another culture uses terms which we do not fully understand or appreciate.

This phenomenon is easily understood when one examines the meaning of the phrase "Je me souviens" which appears on the license plates of cars from Quebec, Canada. Everyone familiar with elementary French knows that it means, "I remember." A closer look might evoke a question as to the structure of the phrase, which literally means, "I, myself, remember." Or, that the structure is different from the phrase "Je comprend, I understand." Explore this question further, and one will find that the expression "Je me souviens" carries a significant meaning for French-speaking Canadians that is deep, complex, and serious and carries with it important social, political, and personal ramifications.

Such was the point that Hirsch was trying to make. At the end of his book, he lists several hundred terms that he feels are necessary to understand in order to communicate clearly in America, with other Americans. This list has generated much criticism. Critics have focused on the list and protested against the idea that certain words or phrases constitute "literacy." Their emphasis on the list rather than on the thesis has often obscured the thesis, and, in some cases, undermined the validity of the thesis.

Therefore, we shall discuss our thesis which contends that there are some basic universal principles of morality upon which we can agree, and that there is a process which we will articulate which is helpful in applying those principles. We shall not, however, produce a list of rights and wrongs which might obscure or bring into question the basic thesis.

This disclaimer does not preclude our mentioning such concepts as honesty and dishonesty, such activities as cheating or stealing, and such principles as freedom and responsibility. But there will be no list.

> The reason, in respect of which are rational beings, is common; if this is so, common also is the reason which commands us what to do, and what not to do; if this is so, there is a common law also; if this is so, we are fellow citizens; if this is so, we are members of some political community; if this is so, the world is in a manner, a state... My nature is rational and social; and my city and country, so far as I am Antonius, is Rome; but so far as I am a man, it is the world (Aurelius, Marcus 178AD).

This statement in **Meditations** indicates the thinking that underlies this endeavor. Aurelius speaks of those basic principles that rational beings throughout history have recognized as the basic moral law. For our purposes, we will call them universal principles. He recognizes that each society has values, attitudes, and mores that differ from all others, and those values are not to be slighted in the least. Yet, the focus is on those universal principles, discovered through reason, that transcend parochial views in order to lead us to those few, but important, principles that are common to us all.

The following definitions should help to clarify the terms that we use so that there will be no misunderstandings.

ETHICS- Ethics is the study of human conduct. It attempts to determine the norms which are considered to be good, as well as those which are considered to be bad–the standards which lead the individual to "right" living.

MORALITY - Morality attempts not so much to decide first principles, but rather to decide how to act upon them. For example, some first principles are: "Do good–avoid evil; Do unto others as you would have them do unto you;" and "Life is good." Morality involves a person's ability to make decisions based on universal ethical standards.

Thus, ethics deals with the study of right and wrong,morality deals with the doing of right and wrong. Ethical is a word often used interchangeably with moral. This can lead to confusion, or at least, dilution of the precise meanings of the two words. Often, canons of ethics are the rules governing groups in their professional conduct. Moral postulates are infinitely more important and deal with first principles relevant to every individual. The medical ethic that says a doctor may not seduce a patient under anesthesia is both an ethical canon and a moral postulate. It is an ethical canon because the medical profession has incorporated this moral principle into its rules for proper medical decorum. It is a moral principle because it extends to all people in all circumstances, at all times. The legal ethic that says a lawyer should do pro bono work is an ethical canon, but not a moral postulate. It is a legal canon because the legal profession has incorporated it into its rules for proper legal decorum. It is not a moral principle because it does not extend to all people in all circumstances, at all times.

VALUES - Values generally refer to moral standards, principles, or qualities considered worthy. Often, however, values are referred to as personal values, i.e., opinion; practical values, i.e., something works; or social values, i.e., what a particular society considers worthwhile at a particular time.

MORAL - IMMORAL - By "moral" and "immoral" we refer to things that are universally good or bad, right or wrong, justified or unjustified. Because they are universal, the propositions that express moral understandings apply to other people as well as ourselves.

LOGIC OF MORALS - There is a "logic of morals" which requires that from a moral postulate there are a string of corollaries which may follow. "If we say that something is morally right or wrong... universally right or wrong, then the logic of morals says what is morally right must be regarded as higher than, or superior to, what is wrong." It follows then, "for example, the understanding of goodness must be preferable to an ignorance of moral things..." In layman's terms, if we agree that there are **some** moral "rights vs. wrongs," we are obliged to seek to understand them. If we understand them, we must apply them. If we apply them, we must do so in a logical fashion. For example, "it was incoherent (for Stephen Douglas) to say, at the same time, that slavery was 'wrong' but that the separate territories should be left to decide whether they would vote slavery up or down." (Arkes, 1986)

Virtually every moral philosophy provides us with some principles from which we can learn in our search for answers. A very serious problem, however, sometimes arises when the concept is swallowed whole. Some examples of the problem along with definitions of those philosophies follow:

HEDONISM - The idea that pleasure is good and pain is bad, and that moral propositions exist within those two parameters. Obviously, the pleasure is a desirable end; obviously, people have an aversion to pain. The problem arises when young people, not yet fully adept at neither critical thinking nor processing information, conclude that **ALL** pleasure is **GOOD** and **ALL** pain is **BAD**. Or, that **ONLY** physical pleasure is **GOOD**; or pain is to be avoided at **ALL** costs.

SITUATION ETHICS - The idea that one decides right and wrong depending on the situation. Obviously, situations alter cases. Obviously, universal principles manifest themselves in wildly different circumstances. If a person concludes that **ONLY** the situation matters, that the operative principles are **NEVER** to be considered, then a child could easily conclude that if a father rewards him for telling the truth at all times, even when the son is confessing to a transgression, and a mother punishes all transgressions, the child might well learn to tell the truth to dad and lie to mom.

EXISTENTIALISM - All truth is subjective, as perceived by the individual. If one concludes that **ONLY** perception is what determines the good, and **ONLY** the individual can make that determination, then a problem arises. Obviously, each person perceives somewhat differently from all others. Perception, and differing perceptions, are essential to the human condition, but when an individual perception conflicts with a universal principle or a universal perception... ah, there's the rub.

UTILITARIANISM - The idea that actions should be judged in a moral sense according to their utility in providing for the greatest good for the greatest number. Pleasure is the basis for this philosophy; the pleasure of the greater number is considered the "good." This philosophy is central to the concept of moral relativism, i.e., in a society in which the greatest number considers slavery **GOOD**, then it is **GOOD**. Another society which considers slavery **BAD**—in that society slavery is **BAD**.

PRAGMATISM - The philosophy which claims that the moral worth of an idea or action lies in the result as determined by experience. The scientific method, a profoundly important concept, has its basis in pragmatism. Once again, the idea that **ONLY** the result is to be taken into account, poses problems. If one concludes that **ONLY** the result is important for the individual, and another concludes that **ONLY** the result is important for the group, then how does that problem get resolved?

IV. UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES AS THEY RELATE TO ETHICS AND MORAL REASONING IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEFINITIONS:

Ethics: The study of human conduct which attempts to determine the norms which are considered to be good, as well as those which are considered to be bad; the standards which lead the individual to "right" living.

Morality: The study of how to act upon ethics which involves the individual's ability to make decisions and solve problems based upon accepted universal, ethical standards.

RESEARCH TELLS US:

Children establish moral and ethical standards within the family and the home. During the early years, the family exerts the strongest influence in helping children formulate their moral attitudes and standards.

As children enter school, the sphere of influence shifts to a broader world, one in which children are required to test their moral standards against those of their peers, teachers, and society at large.

The evolution of an individual's moral development is based on personal experience and can be viewed as the search for a balance between one's perception of right and wrong and that of society's expectations.

There is agreement that human beings pass through stages of moral development. There is no complete agreement as to the elements of these stages. Present taxonomies are primarily grounded in developmental cognitive stage theory, particularly that of Jean Piaget (1965) and extended to the moral domain by Lawrence Kohlberg (1980) and Carol Gilligan (1982). Recently, however, the focus has shifted to social cognitive issues such as empathy, friendship, and conflict resolution.

MORAL STAGE DEVELOPMENT

Jean Piaget linked cognitive and moral stage development. From four to seven years of age, the young child's reasoning is rooted in concrete thought-processes. Therefore, he judges the rightness or wrongness of a situation, including the adherence to or the breaking of rules, based on the consequences of behavior, not the reasons for his actions. As individuals' thinking skills advance to the formal operations stage, they analyze and evaluate conventions and compare past experience or training with new perspectives. They are intellectually capable of debating right and wrong based on abstract reasoning.

Lawrence Kohlberg expanded Piaget's theory of moral development to three levels, each characterized by two stages:

Level 1: **Preconventional** (Elementary School)

Stage 1. Punishment and obedience orientation; pleasure/pain. Obey the rules in order to avoid punishment.

Stage 2. Naive instrumental hedonism. Obey to obtain rewards, to have favors returned.

Level 2: **Conventional** (based on social conformity, secondary school)

Stage 3. "Good-boy/girl" morality. Conform to avoid disapproval. Stereotypes of right behavior. Consideration of others' feelings.

Stage 4. Orientation toward authority. Conform to rules in order to maintain the social order. Sense of "doing one's duty."

Level 3: **Postconventional** (Adults)

Stage 5: Morality of contract, of individual rights, and of democratically accepted law. Moral values are defined in terms of individual rights, legal and societal standards. Ability to accept group consensus.

Stage 6: Morality of individual principles of conscience. Abide by universally accepted ethical principles.

Kohlberg's theory of moral development was based on twenty years of research with males. His formulation of moral development levels was derived from a series of moral dilemmas which he presented to children for their response. It has been demonstrated through subsequent follow-up studies in diverse world-wide cultures that there is universal support for his findings in the first four stages, although there is more cultural diversity in stages five and six.

Carol Gilligan contends that Kohlberg's theory based on strictly male moral judgment is biased and needs to be extended to the female population. It overlooks the fact that children's early socialization emphasizes different values for males and females. Emphasis for boys is on justice and independence; girls are trained to be nurturing, caring, and to value their connectedness to others. Although cognizant of justice, women tend to view moral issues in terms of human relationships and concern for the needs of both sides involved in a dilemma. Gilligan divided moral development into three basic levels:

Level 1: Preconventional morality which focus on a concern for self survival.

Level 2: Conventional morality which is demonstrated through a concern for being responsible and caring for others.

Level 3: Postconventional morality which shows a concern for self and others as interdependent.

There is general acceptance of moral stage development structure, and much subsequent investigation into moral development has extended from these bases. There is, however, acknowledgment that often a dichotomy exists between purely cognitive moral reasoning and moral behaviors as exemplified by recent so-called "white collar crime." This issue needs to be addressed through moral education.

Some advocates believe that solutions to dilemmas faced by children in their everyday lives are a more realistic measure of their moral development than simulated moral scenarios. One teacher wrote, "The overriding generalized dilemma is to decide who to be responsible to in any given situation when an individual's needs are at one extreme and all humanity is on the other." Moral judgment or reasoning determines moral behaviors; however, the latter is influenced by a number of experiential and environmental factors which children need to be helped to identify and understand. This is the goal of moral education.

It is the responsibility of public schools to provide the forum in which children, from the earliest grades through high school, have the opportunity to engage in a process-oriented model of moral education. Under the guidance of knowledgeable adults, students can learn to identify, and acquire coping skills, and solve the problems they face in their lives within a positive, we hope empathetic, supportive community.

V. DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE MORAL EDUCATION

In his famous treatise **The Process of Education**, **Jerome Bruner** (1962) asserted that children can comprehend complex, basic concepts of the humanities and science at early stages of their lives if the structure of the material to be learned is presented at the child's appropriate developmental level. Research in moral education upholds this contention. One of the teachers who responded to the survey used for this paper wrote, "The most telling admission is that youth do not know what morals are. There are so many confused messages from the home, media, school, society in general, so as to lead to a great confusion. They simply do not know, do not understand, and totally misread the terms of morality."

The essence of dilemmas such as justice and injustice, right and wrong, individual responsibility, conflict resolution, and loyalties vs. self-interest can be reduced or elevated to cognitive and psychosocial levels which meet the stage development and experience of their audience.

Schools can provide an educational culture in which children learn to practice positive moral and ethical behavior based upon students' developmental needs and moral reasoning abilities.

VI. THE NEED FOR ETHICS EDUCATION

In preparing this study of moral and ethical education in Connecticut schools, it seemed essential to determine what adults working with students in kindergarten through high school perceived as the moral and ethical dilemmas facing youth today. It was essential, also, to discover what youth, themselves, thought. To obtain this information, two hundred adults and students were questioned, in a random survey, which included a cross section of communities in Connecticut. The responses validate Gilligan's levels of moral development. A summary of responses follows:

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF MORAL AND ETHICAL DILEMMAS:

Elementary school children appear to base their perceptions around issues of fair play, understanding, violence, death, and separation. The major issues identified by them include:

- Cheating
- Stealing
- Stigmatizing individuals based on race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status
- Responsibility–personal and global
- Drugs, alcohol, and tobacco
- Death and violence–war, guns, murder, being killed
- Teenage pregnancy
- Child abuse

- Pressure from peers and adults
- Divorce or death–separation from parents
- How to make and keep friends
- Moving from one locality to another

Middle school students note the same issues as elementary students. They, however, have a better defined concept of ethics, morality, and values. There is a sense of altruism in their definitions which takes them beyond egocentrism to the greater society. As do elementary students, they face many serious personal dilemmas including:

- Drugs, alcohol, tobacco use for themselves and among significant adults and peers
- Sex–different degrees of involvement: peers
- The security of a stable family
- Friends
- Peer pressure for popularity, acceptance, conformity, and/or to do things they may feel are wrong
- Adult and parental pressure to achieve
- Honesty, cheating, vandalism, responsibility, breaking the law
- Cruelty and insensitivity to other people's feelings, "putting people down"
- Environmental issues

High school students continue to see many of the same moral and ethical dilemmas; however, the fact that they live in a less protected environment brings them closer to the life and death issues emanating from moral/ethical knowledge and standards. Adolescents appear to find their dilemmas in the area of making decisions about moral/ethical issues which directly affect them, including:

- Drugs and Alcohol

  Using and selling them to obtain material things

  Alcoholism

  Drinking and driving

- Smoking
- Sexual activity focusing on decisions involving safe sex, pregnancy, abortion
- Stealing, including "lots of kids steal for fun"
- Committing or dealing with suicide
- Peer pressure
- Societal pressures
- Trusting one's own feelings and thoughts

- Pressure

    For good grades

    Acceptance to college

    Pleasing parents and adults

    Fear of failure

- Need to "fit in"
- Violence, weapons for protection
- Identity and individuality
- Cheating, lying, stealing
- Boyfriend/girlfriend conflicts
- Family parental relations/problems

    Whether to listen to parents or to gain independence

    Single parent homes

    Lack of parental guidance

    Disobeying parents and elders

- Global survival

- Lack of respect for one another or for authority

  Hurting others

  Parents or teachers sending students the message that they are stupid

  Desire to succeed when others "pull you down"

- Racial barriers

Adults

Regardless of the ages of the youth group with which adults are involved, there are common concerns that emerge which coincide with that of children:

Breakdown of the family unit leading to

- Lack of parenting
- Child care/latch key children
- Child safety
- Discipline
- Drugs and alcohol
- Cheating, stealing, truth vs. lying

- Mental or physical violence
- Respect for self and/or others
- Sexual activity
- Health issues such as AIDS
- Negative effects of television and media

Adult concerns go beyond those of students. They express a deep concern for the absence of a healthy, societal structure. They express it in the following sentiments:

- Moral relativity: Lack of accepted standards by which to make moral and ethical decisions.
- Children lack an environment which encourages respect for themselves and others.
- Children lack family cohesion, parental supervision, and security.
- Drugs, alcohol, and sex are primary concerns, used for the purpose of escaping life's stress.
- Materialism is fostered through movies, TV, advertising and adult models which lead to a culture whose goal is to acquire "things" by legal or illegal means.
- Peer pressure and popular culture are bombarding youth today.

- *Students report that they* lie and cheat in order to live up to adult and parental expectations. Should youth accept or question adults' value system?

- Absence of a work ethic, religion, fair play, honesty–how can these values be justified when society doesn't support this?

- Entitlement–Lack of standards for academic and personal performance. Performing a task "half best" seems to be acceptable.

- Achievement–Students don't have a sense of how to achieve what they want in an ethical manner.

- Lack of responsibility to opt for honesty for the good of society vs. selfish interests or need to conform to peer code.

CONCLUSIONS:

Perhaps the most telling issue facing society today is summed up by one high school teacher whose students told him, after an in-depth discussion of morals and ethics, "We have no basis for morality." There appears to be little difference between adult and student perceptions of the moral issues youth face in their lives. The difference is in degree. As children grow older, simple issues become more complex and profound. Perhaps most disturbing is the sense of despair expressed. We believe that students truly want to act in an ethical manner, but they express insecurity in coming to positive decisions due to a lack of training in traditional societal values. Oné student claimed there is a "lack of learning from the home–I do what I want. There is a lack of discipline from my parents–I don't have to do what my mother says to. I can't get into college because my grades aren't good. I can't do the class work because I don't know how. I have sex because it makes me feel good all over."

Each of the moral and ethical dilemmas expressed by students and adults is vitally important. The composite presents a compelling and urgent need to build programs for moral and ethical education in an integrated fashion into all phases of the schools' curriculum in order to provide youth with the basis for moral standards.

VII. ETHICS AND MORAL REASONING
GOALS AND SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES
K-8

I. <u>To develop a sense of self-respect</u>

A. Be able to list all personal qualities and characteristics

B. Be able to differentiate between good and bad qualities and those that are neither

C. Be able to explain why the above differentiations were made

D. Generalize about what are good, bad, or neutral qualities in a person

II. <u>To learn how to respect and get along with others</u>

A. Explain the meaning of the following and give examples of each in practice:

- Responsibility
- Cooperation
- Consideration
- Collaboration

B. Develop effective communication skills

C. Be able to define fairness and explain its many applications to interactions between people

III. <u>To learn how to be a citizen within a community</u>

A. Be able to define democracy as a concept, system of government, etc.

B. Be able to explain the difference between rights, freedoms, and privileges

C. Be able to explain the purpose of rights, freedoms, and privileges for the individual and for members of a society

D. Explain the meaning of the following and give examples of each in practice:

- Justice
- Equality
- Self-interest
- Collective good

IV. <u>To learn how to make rational decisions</u>

A. Learn how to examine and collect information

B Be able to discern between fact and opinion

C. Be able to recognize bias in ideas, statements, etc.

D. Learn about and try to understand change and its impact upon events themselves, ideas, and their context, etc.

E. Be able to explain the steps involved in making an informed decision

F. Demonstrate informed decision making and be able to explain why the action taken was taken (explain rationale in terms of implications)

V. <u>To learn about ethics and moral reasoning</u>

A. Be able to define ethics and morals as terms

B. Be able to explain the ethical and moral issues involved within an event or series of events

C. Be able to explain the moral and ethical implications of different possible actions taken in a given situation

D. Demonstrate ethical and moral behavior

This is an outline of skills arranged developmentally to guide the teachers of elementary and middle school students in the preparation of lessons and activities intended to foster the ethical and moral development of their students.

Mortimer Adler's (1981) suggestion that all ideas can be grouped into six general over-arching concepts can be seen by relating the five K-8 goals with Adler:

Truth	II, IV	:	
Beauty	I, IV	:	ideas we judge by
Goodness	I, II, III, V	:	
Equality	II, III, IV, V	:	
Justice	II, III, IV, V	:	ideas we act on
Liberty	III, IV	:	

VIII. ETHICS AND MORAL REASONING CONCEPTUAL COURSE OUTLINE, 9-12

Basis for Course: Public schools must develop and implement clearly-defined programs designed to enhance moral and ethical development in our students.

A senior high school elective will introduce the student to moral philosophies that serve as a basis for effective ethical study.

The study begins with an overview of the sources of contemporary ethical and moral reasoning, providing the student with an understanding of the variety of influences and perspectives underlying such a study.

In looking for the bases of ethical and moral reasoning in a multi-cultural society such as ours, it is important to take into consideration the influences of people outside the European mainstream. While there are explicit ethical guidelines within the western intellectual tradition, no such delineation is made in the variety of African and Eastern traditions. In these cases, the basis of ethical and moral reasoning is not found in theology or philosophy, but in those civilizations' respective modes of socialization.

This course also introduces the student to the use of literature in the study of ethics, and the process of deductive reasoning, as well as writing techniques designed to underscore these newly-acquired behaviors.

Finally, working on the premise that the best way to evaluate ethical understanding is to give the student an opportunity to make ethical decisions and act upon them, the remainder of the course is composed of specific and timely case studies for student reaction.

Objectives: At the end of this course, the students will...

1. **Demonstrate** an understanding of the basis for contemporary ethical and moral reasoning as provided by Classical philosophy, African and Asian traditions, Eastern and Western religious philosophies, anthropology and history through papers and presentations;

2. **Identify** the ethical issues involved, the possible implications and their respective ethical bases, as well as personally respond (with emphasis on the ethical implications of that response) in each of the case studies covered.

PART I - What is Ethics?

Unit One - The Basis for Ethical and Moral Reasoning

A. Classical Philosophy: The Western Tradition

1. Plato - "virtue and justice"
2. Aristotle - "matter and form"
3. Thucydides - "might makes right"

B. Tradition and Customs: The Non-European Bases

1. **Mencius** on the ethical implications of The Analects
2. **Sun-Tzu**, The Art of War
3. The **Vedic** moral tradition
4. **African** spiritualism (as a basis of evil)

C. **The Judeo-Christian Tradition**

1. The concept of a "covenant"
2. Ethics and the Almighty: "sin"
3. The concept of "some higher moral truth"

D. **Anthropology and History**

1. Societal basis for ethics, justice, laws
2. Corporate communities and kinship
3. Human beings and nature: "moral evil" vs. "natural evil."
4. Cultural relativism: "historical context"
5. **Karma**: The Buddhist and Hindu concepts

Unit Two - Ethics and Moral Development: The Process of Reasoning

A. **Deduction and Inference** - "how we make decisions"

B. **The psychological dimensions of ethics**

1. Basic learning theory: "right from wrong"
2. Gilligan on ethical reasoning as a developmental process
3. Motivation
4. Socialization and point-of-view

C. **Learning about ethics** using literature and history (examples of individuals facing ethical dilemmas)

1. Fictional characters - i.e.,

   Antigone **(Sophocles)**

   A Man for All Seasons **(Bolt)**

   Things Fall Apart **(Achibe)**

   Sound of Waves **(Mishima)**

   Their Eyes Were Watching God **(Hurston)**

   The Caine Mutiny Court Martial **(Wouk)**

2. Historical events - i.e., **Chief Joseph** and the **Nez Perce**, I Will Fight No More

NOTE:

A suggested activity might be the use of a "triple-entry journal" by the student while reading the materials suggested in Unit Two. This would provide a continuous and structured opportunity to analyze the moral dilemmas of the characters and historical figures. Such a journal would involve dividing the pages of a notebook into three columns: the left-hand column for recording specific events, the center column for outlining and describing the dilemma being faced, and the right-hand column for the student to explore the character's options and their respective implications.

PART II - Contemporary Applications of Ethical Reasoning

Unit Three - Ethics and the Individual in Society

Case Studies: Personal values and conformity

Responsibility of citizenship

Exercise of civil rights

"Whistleblowing"

Civil disobedience

Morality (sexual preference, abortion, et. al.)

Capital punishment

Unit Four - Ethics and the Individual in Nature

Case Studies: Standards of living and "quality of life"

Economic survival vs. the environment

Genetic engineering

Exploration and "ownership" of discoveries

Unit Five - Ethics and the Individual as Global Citizen

Case Studies: Military engagement

Cooperation and commitment

Sovereignty

IX. THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN TEACHING VALUES

Despite the changed nature of the American family, it still plays the major role in the ethical and moral development of the child. Parents are the child's first teachers and role models. Children imitate parent behavior and language from the beginning. The child's questions about the world around him and the answers given affect his behavior well before he enters school.

Once in school, children potentially experience a clash between home values and classroom values. Some would argue that this clash is increasing as the social context of education changes. When the children's classroom instruction includes ethics and morality lessons, the importance of the home/school partnership is critical.

In contemporary American society, there is no longer one standard for parent behavior. Too often parents make decisions impulsively, on a hurried reflection of their own child-parent memories. Together, parents and educators need to take the time to reflect on ethical issues so that the child is not put into precarious situations of value conflict.

Quality schools are marked by a constancy of purpose. They play a specific role in defining the ethical standards cooperatively with parents and the community. When the home and school are in agreement about the moral education of the child, a true partnership exists.

X. CASCD ETHICS CASE STUDY

BACKGROUND

This case involves a challenge to instructional materials used by sixth grade teachers in a Connecticut middle school. The school is in a suburban school system with approximately 3,500 students spread across four elementary schools, one 6-8 middle school and one 9-12 high school. The middle school has long been acquainted with current research and practice in the most effective ways to educate early adolescents. The teachers are teamed in each of its three grade levels. Various curricula stress the importance of the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge and focus on decision-making, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. Moreover, the school system was one of the first in Connecticut to meet full compliance with the rigorous Federal and State Health and Substance Abuse Prevention mandates.

The instructional materials challenged were used in a sixth-grade curriculum, now called the Partners Program, taught over a time span of 25-30 class periods.

THE CHALLENGE

Early in the summer of 1990, two families requested a meeting with the middle school principal to raise questions about some instructional materials they understood were used at the sixth-grade level. Entitled Skills for Adolescents, produced by Quest International (1985), these materials were used in a pilot program during the 1989-90 school year with some sixth-grade students prior to full implementation for sixth-grade students in the approaching fall of 1990. The Skills for Adolescents program is widely praised throughout the country for its emphasis on adolescent skills in the areas of peer relations, self-esteem, and decision-making.

The parents charged that the Skills for Adolescents' emphasis on self-esteem and social skills leads to increased drug use. Although the meeting was informal, the parents left the meeting having clearly communicated to the school that the program was not needed for students who are "well-grounded in values." At the September 1990, Board of Education meeting, two parents presented an even more comprehensive challenge to the curriculum. Their challenge asserted the following:

- The materials showed an over-emphasis on self-esteem.

- The materials showed an over-emphasis on open ended decision-making.

- The use of extensive strategies such as role-playing, teacher as facilitator, students sitting in a circle and so forth, place the teacher in the role of therapist.

- The substance abuse curriculum, when presented through a case study approach where students learn refusal skills, is inappropriate because it suggests that there is a choice for students relative to drug use.

- Mandating the Partners Program for all students sends the message that the school authorities "believe the majority of the families are dysfunctional and their children need social repair to exhibited pathology."

- At a subsequent Board of Education meeting, the challengers informed the Board that they had invited a "national expert" to town to debate the Board or Board officials on the appropriateness of these kinds of curriculum materials in the public school.

THE BOARD'S RESPONSE

After listening closely to the parents' concerns, the Board of Education approved the school administration's plan to:

- Place the Skills for Adolescents materials on the approved list of materials consistent with the Board's textbook approval practices through June 1991.

- Expand portions of the Partners Program to all three sixth-grade clusters effective January 1992 (a one-semester delay).

- During the first semester, provide information sessions to parents regarding all aspects of the program.

- Develop a detailed curriculum guide for the Partners Program, instead of relying solely on the materials produced by the Skills for Adolescents Quest International Program.

- Convene a reactor panel of experts and community members who serve in the helping and service professions to advise on all aspects of the curriculum development.

- Bring to the Board, in June of 1991, the Partners Program Curriculum guide for adoption.

CRITICAL ISSUES

The school district must firmly establish a philosophy, mission, and position on ethics instruction. Specifically, does the district philosophy reflect a neutral position or an advocacy position with respect to the appropriateness of ethics instruction?

How can instructional goals at the district and school levels reflect the philosophy and mission of the school with respect to ethics instruction?

How can classroom level instructional practices be made consistent with goals, mission, and philosophy relative to ethics instruction?

In establishing philosophy, goals, and instructional practices relative to ethics, how can educators ground their decisions firmly on a balance between profound knowledge bases about student learning and the core beliefs of the school system.

Educators need to be familiar with points of controversy in ethics education. At first glance, some will not be aware that self-esteem education, problem solving, decision-making, drug education, and death and sex education instruction all present problems to some elements in our society. How can we develop this awareness?

Educators need to be aware of national right wing political and fundamental religious organizations who have well-staked and well-funded campaigns to block instruction in the areas included in ethics instruction. These national organizations often train and fund challengers at the local level to prevent districts from including direct ethical instruction. How can we prepare educators to deal with these efforts to block ethics instruction?

Districts need a well-defined curriculum challenge process, one which goes beyond mere textbook challenges, to ready themselves for attack from the political and religious right wings. How can we create this process?

In communities where this debate occurs, it is often delivered in emotionally charged rhetoric. Decision makers need to be objective in their discussions of ethics education and focus specifically on desired outcomes which result from ethics instruction.

XI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Public schools in the United States have historically been one of the primary institutions responsible for giving our children a fairly specific shadow, or unwritten curriculum, containing the ethical and moral standards of our society.

In the past, the schools did this so effectively and consistently that there was no need for a formal curriculum. However, during the past century, and particularly in the period since World War II, the public schools have increasingly diminished their role in this area. This hasn't always been a conscious decision on the schools' part.

In reality, it is more the schools' reflecting our society's move away from more rigid codes of behavior and decision-making. This move certainly has often been reflected in our legal system, which quite consistently has moved to a more personal rights orientation. The critical question is, "Are our students better off now than they were?" The survey conducted as part of this paper leads us to answer with a clear, emphatic "no."

We believe that the primary reason for this is that as we moved to a more personal rights orientation and decreased our reliance on arbitrary and sometimes rigid codes of behavior, we did not equip our students with the tools necessary to act responsibly in a system that depends more on personal decision-making. We set our students adrift. We were, and are, reluctant to tell them what to do, and we don't teach them how to make decisions grounded in ethical and moral standards.

It appears to us that our standards increasingly produce decisions with little or no regard for any sense of ethical or moral standards. Do we have to look any further than the number of adolescents dying of gunshot wounds each year in our cities to confirm this fact?

It is time for the schools, in partnership with families and other societal institutions, to re-assert their leadership in training our children in ethical and moral reasoning and behavior.

We are not advocating a return to rigid, inflexible standards of behavior. We are advocating that the schools become leaders at what they do best–teaching–teaching students how to behave with awareness and consideration of ethical and moral issues.

Public schools need to state clearly and emphatically that ethical and moral behavior is important and valued.

We need to train our children to consider ethical and moral issues in making decisions and help them to move away from the all too often standard, "If it's good for me, then it's good."

Schools must implement this training in several important ways:

At the elementary level, the most effective way is not a formal curriculum, rather it is by the schools, as a whole, modeling what we want our students to do, acting daily in an ethical and moral manner, in big decisions and in small decisions, and demanding such behavior from our students. We do this by making our students aware, in a developmentally appropriate fashion, of the ethical and moral principles and by stressing why they are important.

At the secondary level, we do this by offering formal training in ethical and moral reasoning. One teacher said, "Young people face the dilemma of knowing that they must somehow change the rules by which society operates. Nothing in the world seems to work harmoniously. Young people know that the practices of disrespect and the turning away from concern for the general good of all are what they must reverse. They must return to universal truths and spiritual values or they must create a different system. (That's a heavy concept, but they honestly know these things.)"

We have a serious obligation to our students to give them the tools they need to live as adults in our society. Are any academic emphases more important than producing adults who can behave in an ethical and moral manner as they assume the leadership of our country?

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recognize that our schools project ethical and moral values to students.

2. Conduct an ethical/moral self-examination of your school. Look at what the entire school staff does and says in an objective manner and determine what ethical and moral values are being communicated to students. Look for inconsistencies, developmentally appropriate practices, and levels of consciousness. Compare what you find to what you feel you should be communicating.

3. All school personnel need to be more aware of the ethical and moral standards they demonstrate.

4. All school personnel need training to help them use everyday situations to reinforce developmentally appropriate ethical and moral concepts.

5. Conduct a district-wide ethical/moral self-examination with representatives from each school, and community social institutions. Articulate the ethical and moral concepts to be introduced and the level at which they will be emphasized.

6. Purposefully implement a program to teach ethics and moral reasoning.

7. Conduct periodic reviews of the ethical and moral standards of your district, and revise the program accordingly.

PLEASE NOTE:

While this paper directs its attention only to public, educational institutions, the schools can become a force within the community in the area of ethical and moral reasoning. Schools should investigate ways in which they can translate these principles into the larger community.

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